

Suffolk Parent Carer Forum Meeting Update



Shadow Improvement Board 07/06/24

Our Chair, Claire Smith, represented SPCF at the Suffolk County Council Shadow Improvement Board meeting and had the below to share

“We have been running our Annual Survey for the past 3 weeks which is due to close this evening. We are pleased with the response this year. We have doubled last year's responses! We know that parents and carers report survey fatigue so we are very grateful to those who took time out of their busy lives to participate. We look forward to sharing the full results with you all very soon.

We have also seen continued growth for the forum this month in membership uptake and social media reach.

We are holding an open event in Stowmarket on 19th June and another in Lowestoft on 12th July and are grateful to those who have confirmed attendance but are disappointed in the response to the Lowestoft event. Attendance of this event is important and senior leaders need to prioritise it.

It has been disappointing to see the equivalent of more than 2 average working weeks for SPCF lost to cancelled meetings at short notice. Whilst we recognise there can be genuine reasons, we are finding meetings cancelled with poor excuses.

We attended the Ofsted and DFE mini deep dive feedback session in May. Families fed back truly heartbreaking accounts of their experiences with the EHCP and annual review process since the inspection in November. The effect of these poor experiences are having profound effects on peoples as a direct result of their dealings with Suffolk County Council when trying to secure the legal minimum education for their child.

Families are still being given incorrect information on EHCNAs and incorrect information remains on Suffolks process and guidance for education settings.

A few years back a study was conducted, the findings were that the stress levels of parents of Autistic children are comparable to a combat soldier. We have no reason to believe this has changed.

Families tell us they are very concerned for their child or young persons mental health. Support is delayed and crisis happens.

Complaints continue to be a problem for families. Our survey results so far shows us that families feel their complaints are not understood by the complaint handler, complaints are not escalated, staff are rude and unhelpful and there are no discussions with the person making the complaint. Many months ago we asked for communications to families on the complaints process stages. This still hasn't happened.

It appears to be the current trend to blame issues on family services being short staffed. It is not an excuse in law and it is not an excuse to treat people poorly. Staff treat families this way, violate legislation and there is no come back or learning. Staff will continue in this way as the confidence feedback loop is strong. We see it, we hear it and we experience it. There is no excuse. There is STILL no accountability.

Families continue to be affected by poor or no communication. Too many do not know who their case worker is and receive no communication when case workers change.”



Working towards a brighter future for
Suffolk's children and young people

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